

# Killer series may not be in the cards

BY RACHEL L. JONES

Free Press Staff Writer

**D**on't look for Jeffrey Dahmer, Richard Speck and the Boston Strangler at a store near you. May Day may be doomsday for True Crime Trading Cards.

The Metro Detroit Chapter of Parents of Murdered Children and Other Survivors of Homicide Victims is joining more than 300 chapters nationwide in trying to block the cards' planned May 1 arrival in stores. Sen. Michael Bouchard, R-Birmingham, and others in the Michigan Legislature have drafted two resolutions urging the publishers to scrap the cards and local stores to not sell them.

"I would hate to think of the murderer of my son recognized as a hero on a trading card," says Levada Austin-Giesey, POMC leader. Her 19-year-old son, William, was shot to death during a 1987 robbery in Pontiac. "I think (the cards' creators) have to be absolutely deranged to come up with something so cruel," she says. "It's like we're being victimized all over."

Austin-Giesey's group and the other POMC chapters hope to gather thousands of signatures to protest the cards. POMC has 50,000 members nationwide, including 100 families in metro Detroit.



Cards featuring serial killers are part of the True Crime Trading Cards series.

The True Crime series, published by Eclipse Enterprises in Forestville, Calif., will bear the likenesses of some of the most heinous serial killers and mass murderers in American history. Some of the cards would be tinged with a simulated splattering of blood.

In its February newsletter, POMC said, "Survivors have put up with enough. Books, movies, videos, murder mystery weekends and now trading cards are available that capitalize on the suffering of others, and often make celebrities of those

who brutalize, terrorize torture and kill innocent people."

"It's their constitutional right to make the cards," Bouchard says. "But why in the world, at a time when we need heroes so badly, do they have to put these kind of people on trading cards?"

Bouchard and other legislators sponsored Senate Resolution 371 and Concurrent Resolution 473; the former was passed by the Senate and the latter is awaiting approval by the House.

Meijer Inc., the 65-store retail chain

based in Grand Rapids, already has refused to sell the cards. "We were uncomfortable from the beginning," says spokeswoman Jennifer Downs. "The resolution just helped confirm our distaste."

Publishers Catherine Yronwode and Dean Mullaney, a husband and wife team with a lifelong love of trading cards, are mystified by the furor. They say it has been both frustrating and frightening.

"I understand people's sentiments," Yronwode says. "They've been trained like a pit bull to respond to something they really don't have accurate information about."

The pair have received death threats and obscene hate mail. Legislators in Arkansas and Maryland attempted to have Eclipse held liable if a murder was committed by someone owning the cards; both states' measures were defeated.

Yronwode insists the cards are being vilified unfairly. The 110-card set contains only about 22 serial killers and mass murderers, she says. The rest of the cards include police, gangsters who ordered hits, people who committed single murders, FBI agents, bank robbers, bootleggers and other crime-related characters.

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OK, to keep the eco-tourists happy, we could fence off the fungus, like Stonehenge. We could do Earth-friendly nature walks and dig underground viewing areas.

Sponsors would line up:

"Fuji. Official Film of Fungus World."

"Have a Coke and some fungi."

For souvenirs, we call the Chia Pet people and ask what they could work up. Oh, and those little plastic bubble things you turn upside down to show snow falling on the forest? A natural.

One last thing. Disney has Mickey Mouse. Sea World has Shamu. Fungus World could have — ta-da — Fun Gus, the Crazy Mushroom Man!

"Maybe. Who knows?" says Goriesky.

"There has been a steady stream of traffic out there."

Only to multiply, Lois. Like mushrooms.

## DAVID LETTERMAN'S TOP TEN INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE 38-ACRE FUNGUS:

- 10 Came out of hiding to appear as character witness at Gotti trial.
- 9 Bill Clinton once tried to smoke some of it.
- 8 Has vanity plate: Fungus-1.
- 7 Some polls show it's running neck-and-neck with Jerry Brown.
- 6 Elvis once had staff try to bulldoze it onto 40-acre pizza.
- 5 Section of it used to make William Shatner's hairpiece.
- 4 Might be an old YMCA they forgot to disinfect.
- 3 Believed to be smarter than Quayle.
- 2 Nickname: Debbie
- 1 Tastes a little like chicken.

# Victims' parents deplore cards featuring killers

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Yronwode says the cards won't be distributed in convenience stores and neighborhood mom-and-pop joints. "Ninety percent of the people who buy our cards are 30 and over," she says. The cards will mainly be sold through specialty trading stores.

Opponents say those explanations miss the point. Bouchard, a former police officer who investigated serial killings, says it's "disgusting to think that a victim's family member may walk into a store and see the man who tortured and killed their relatives on a trading card."

That could happen for some Michigan families. John Norman Collins, suspected of killing seven young Michigan women during the late '60s, will be featured in the next set — if there is one.

POMC national executive director

**John Norman Collins, suspected of killing seven young Michigan women during the late '60s, will be featured in the next set — if there is one.**

Nancy Ruhe says the group hopes to present at least 100,000 signatures to Eclipse before the May debut. The group also has received support from churches, PTAs and other groups wanting to join the protest. If that doesn't work, they'll approach stores selling the cards and urge owners to reconsider.

Ruhe poses this question to Eclipse: "If they want to make a trading card about murder, why don't they publish ones about the victims, who they were and what they could have been?"

For more information about Parents of Murdered Children and Other Survivors of Homicide

Victims, call the Metro Detroit Chapter at 624-4809, 6-8 p.m. weekdays. The group's next meeting will be at 6 p.m. April 13 at 17233 W. Ten Mile Road.

For information on True Crime Trading Cards, call 1-800-468-6828, 12:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. weekdays.

but ... I really wasn't at the point of saying I was going to give her any money. At that point, she flies off the handle and tells me she's going to take me to court and sue me."

"Financially, it's been hard. I got my high school diploma, but I've never had a chance to go back to college.

"It's expensive. Every year things go up. His jeans cost more than my jeans because he's a big kid. He's 5 feet tall and not even 11. For 3½ years, I worked two jobs.

"He's a growing boy. He's got to have clothes, and he's got doctor bills and dentist bills."

"It really wasn't about him needing to meet me or her getting on with her life. I think it was about her wanting money."

"When I contacted the prosecutor's office, I knew where he was, where he worked, his address. I gave them everything. The first thing they do is send him a letter asking if you are this child's father, and if you are, sign this form and send it back. Of course, he didn't send it back."

"About a year and a half later, she

sued me. I always thought if something was going to be done, I wanted it to go through the courts. I wanted it to be official so there was no question in anybody's mind. It could all be said and done with, and I won't have to worry about her harassing me ...

"I contacted a lawyer and asked what steps I need to take and told him the same story I've told you."

"It just dragged on and on. They finally served him actual papers to go to court in November 1989, which is when they start the arrearages. So my arrearages only date back to the service of papers. I filed in May of 1988. ... By the following summer, 1989, they had ordered blood tests, and he absolutely denied to them that he was the father. It took three or four months just to get the blood test scheduled. The day before Joey and I were supposed to go ... Chris admitted being the father."

"A year later, I was finally served with the papers and ever since that point I ... admitted paternity. ...

"I said let them put a dollar amount on the support, and it took a year to get to that point. ...

**That they are Joey's parents is about all Marlene Postma and Christopher Pitts agree upon. She's living with Joey near Grand Rapids. He's in Memphis, Tenn.**

"There are a lot of extenuating circumstances here. I have a hearing-impaired daughter who requires a special school for her to communicate. I laid out all my expenses. My wife works, but we got two car notes, day care and the special school for our daughter, who is 6.

from it. And I have been real up front, and I've been doing the things the system asked me to do.

"But I think I got stuck."

"At least I'm educated, and I had the support of my family. But ... it's been tough. It's been real tough. But the biggest thing is I have my pride."

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